WHAT IS CLAIMED IS:

1.   A method of sending a message by computer-based communication, said method comprising:

    receiving from a sender of the message an identification of an intended message recipient; and

    selecting one or more communications applications to be used for transmission of the message.

2.   The method as recited in claim 1, wherein the received identification comprises the name of the recipient.

3.   The method as recited in claim 1, wherein the received identification comprises an identifier effective to identify the recipient to one of the one or more communications applications.

4.   The method as recited in claim 1, wherein said receiving an identification is done at the initiation of a communications session, and the sending of the message is done during the communications session.

5.   The method as recited in claim 1, wherein said selecting comprises evaluating availability of the recipient for communication using each of a set of possible communications applications.

6.   The method as recited in claim 5, wherein said evaluating availability comprises accessing stored availability information for the recipient.

7.   The method as recited in claim 1, further comprising receiving from the sender a preferred characteristic of the transmission, prior to said selecting.

8.   The method as recited in claim 7, wherein the preferred characteristic comprises a preferred speed of the transmission.

9.   The method as recited in claim 7, wherein the preferred characteristic comprises a preferred level of security of the transmission.

10.   The method as recited in claim 7, wherein the preferred characteristic comprises a relative size of the message to be sent.

11.   The method as recited in claim 1, further comprising sending at least a portion of the message using each of the selected communications applications, such that the entirety of the message is sent.

12.   The method as recited in claim 11, wherein multiple communications applications are selected, further comprising dividing the message into separate portions appropriate for sending by the respective selected communications applications, prior to said sending.

13.   The method as recited in claim 11, wherein the sender is not notified of the communications applications used to send the message.

14.   The method as recited in claim 1, wherein the message comprises an email message, chat message, or attachment file.

15.   The method as recited in claim 14, wherein the message comprises two or more items from the group consisting of an email message, a chat message and an attachment file.

16.   The method as recited in claim 11, further comprising retrieving one or more recipient identifiers effective to identify the recipient to each of the selected communications applications, prior to said sending.

17.   The method as recited in claim 16, wherein said retrieving comprises accessing a data structure storing the recipient identifiers.

18.   A system for computer-based communication, said system comprising a computer including a storage medium, wherein the storage medium includes program instructions executable on the computer for:

        receiving, from a sender of a message, an identification of an intended message
                recipient; and

        selecting one or more communications applications to be used for transmission of
                the message.

19.   The system as recited in claim 18, wherein the program instructions are within a communications aggregation program.

20.   The system as recited in claim 18, wherein the computer comprises a display device and input device adapted for use by the sender of the message.

21.   The system as recited in claim 18, wherein the computer is adapted for coupling over a network to an additional computer used by the sender of the message.

22.   The system as recited in claim 21, further comprising the additional computer, operably coupled over a network to the computer.

23. The system as recited in claim 18, wherein the storage medium further includes program instructions executable for sending at least a portion of the message using each of the selected communications applications, such that the entirety of the message is sent.

24. The system as recited in claim 23, wherein the computer is adapted for coupling over the network to an additional computer used by the recipient of the message.

25. The system as recited in claim 24, further comprising the additional computer, operably coupled over a network to the computer.

26. A computer-usable carrier medium, comprising:

first program instructions executable on a computer for receiving, from a sender of a message, an identification of an intended message recipient; and

second program instructions executable on the computer for selecting one or more communications applications to be used for transmission of the message.

27. The carrier medium as recited in claim 26, wherein the first and second program instructions are within a communications aggregation program stored on the carrier medium.

28. The carrier medium as recited in claim 26, wherein the second program instructions are further executable for evaluating availability of the recipient for communication using each of a set of possible communications applications.

29. The carrier medium as recited in claim 28, wherein the second program instructions are executable for accessing stored availability information for the recipient.

30.   The carrier medium as recited in claim 29, further comprising a data structure

including the availability information.

31.   The carrier medium as recited in claim 30, wherein the data structure further

stores a set of recipient identifiers effective to identify the recipient to each of the

multiple communications applications.

32.   The carrier medium as recited in claim 30, wherein the data structure comprises

an object in an object-based programming approach.

33.   The carrier medium as recited in claim 26, further comprising third program

instructions executable for receiving from the sender a preferred characteristic of the

transmission, prior to said selecting.

34.   The carrier medium as recited in claim 26, further comprising third program

instructions executable for sending at least a portion of the message using each of the

selected communications applications, such that the entirety of the message is sent.

35.   The carrier medium as recited in claim 34, further comprising fourth program

instructions executable for, when multiple communications applications are selected,

dividing the message into separate portions appropriate for sending by the respective

selected communications applications, prior to said sending.

36.   The carrier medium as recited in claim 34, further comprising fourth program

instructions executable for retrieving one or more recipient identifiers to identify the

recipient to each of the selected communications applications, prior to said sending.

37.   A method of sending a message by computer-based communication, said method comprising:

receiving from a sender of the message an identification of an intended message recipient;

receiving from the sender a preferred characteristic of the transmission;

selecting one or more communications applications to be used for transmission of the message; and

sending at least a portion of the message using each of the selected communications applications, such that the entirety of the message is sent.

38.   The method as recited in claim 37, further comprising retrieving one or more recipient identifiers effective to identify the recipient to each of the selected communications applications, prior to said sending.

39.   The method as recited in claim 37, wherein multiple communications applications are selected, further comprising dividing the message into separate portions appropriate for sending by the respective selected communications applications, prior to said sending.

40.   The method as recited in claim 37, wherein the preferred characteristic comprises a preferred speed of the transmission.

41.   The method as recited in claim 37, wherein the preferred characteristic comprises a preferred level of security of the transmission.

42.   The method as recited in claim 37, wherein the preferred characteristic comprises a relative size of the message to be sent.